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E D I C A L N E W S

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Along with the amazing advances in medical technology in recent years, there has been a parallel increase in the number of students attending school with specialized, physical health care needs. As a result, school personnel face new challenges in providing health care services for these students. Students with chronic illnesses, students who need to receive medicines throughout the school day, and students who regularly require medical care—all test our current system of delivery of medical services in the public schools.

The Special Education Division (SED) of the California Department of Education (CDE) has been providing leadership to improve programs and services for all of its students, including students with special health care needs. This includes anyone who may require health services or some other form of related support services, program modifications, or technology to benefit from their educational experience. Those students with chronic illnesses (such as diabetes, asthma, leukemia, epilepsy, cancer, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, and others) and students with acute illnesses may qualify for specialized health care services. These services are prescribed by a physician, require medical training, and are necessary for the student to attend school. Health care procedures may then be assigned to school staff to administer under the training and supervision of a credentialed school nurse, public health nurse, or licensed physician. Some health care procedures may need a licensed professional to administer in school.

In order to effectively and safely meet the challenges incumbent in

providing this care, schools must develop partnerships with parents and health care providers. These three groups working together for the best interest of the child are sure to create a program of safe and healthy medical accommodations in our schools.

A credentialed school nurse is the person qualified to initiate a health assessment of the student, identify health needs for school attendance, and develop a health care plan to accommodate these needs. However, parent input, participation, and agreement are critical to this process.

After an individualized school health care plan is formulated, it then needs to be presented to the IEP (Individualized

Education Program) team for further collaboration and approval. Once approved, the health care plan becomes a part of the IEP as a health care service.

Although the health care plan is not an educational mandate, it is a standard nursing practice and ensures the best possible health care in a learning environment for students.

The SED is revising and updating the CDE publication *Guidelines and Procedures for Meeting the Specialized Physical Health Care Needs of Pupils*, which was published to assist parents, school administrators, nurses, and community agencies in understanding the Education Code and regulations that govern health care services in schools. A representative committee is working to complete this update. Additionally, the Procedural Safeguards and Referral Service Unit at the SED provides resources and guidance on physical health care services for pupils. Call 800/926-0648 for assistance.